



# ST. TIMOTHY'S TIMES

## DAILY DEVOTIONAL READING

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PO Box 380 Winter Park, Florida 32790

### Prayer for St. Timothy's

*Most loving God, whose wisdom  
has guided St. Timothy's  
Anglican Church  
since its beginning,  
stir up your Spirit in our midst  
and lead us forward in the work  
we are called to do.*

*Enable this congregation to  
continue in service to you and  
in ministry within and  
beyond our walls.*

*Cleanse us of petty rivalries,  
sensitivities, vanities,  
discourtesies – everything  
which distracts us, thus freeing  
us to rejoice in the good  
performed by others.*

*Grant that we may be united in  
a common purpose and share in  
a single spirit...  
your Spirit, Lord.*

*Bless our work together that we  
may faithfully envision what you  
are calling us to be and to do,  
and bless our efforts to be  
faithful to your calling.*

*Grant that your attractive  
goodness may be seen in all our  
faces, your warm accents of  
love heard in all our words, and  
in our lives may we show  
something of you to  
all the world.*

*Through Jesus Christ our Lord,  
AMEN.*

### Wednesday, May 1

#### Birthdays:

*Prayers for: Artis & Ayele Enders-Preston, Ayele, Allahyea; Wade & Valerie Fennel; Barry & Sharon Firestone*

**1 Thessalonians 5:12-28 But we request of you, brethren, that you appreciate those who diligently labor among you and have charge over you in the Lord and give you instruction. (v.12)**

During my rebellious days as a young man, I resented some people in positions of authority, never wanting anyone to "tell me what to do." That attitude also led to more than one job failure. When I was 27, I accepted Jesus and submitted myself to his leadership. In doing so, I learned to submit myself to the leadership of others in both secular and spiritual realms. In other words, I became "teachable." I've learned to take directions from others, including pastors, supervisors, and others in leadership roles. That may have been the most valuable lesson I ever learned. While I have since held several leadership roles, there are many areas of life where I am a follower. I don't think anyone can become a successful leader until he or she has learned to follow. Jesus first words to his disciples were "Follow me!"—not "help me out" or "give me some advice." Until we learn to submit to appropriate spiritual leaders, God will never give us the opportunity to develop our leadership skills.

Leviticus 19:1-18; Psalm 72; Matthew 6:19-24.

### Thursday, May 2

#### Birthdays:

*Prayers for: Kevin & Dena Fennel, Darcy, Kelsey, Rory, Danielle; Linda & Pat Flavin, Erin, Kaitlyn; Benjamin & Tey Flores*

**Leviticus 19:26-37 "Do not turn to mediums or spiritists; do not seek them out to be defiled by them. I am the LORD your God." (v.31)**

Astrology is the ancient science that claims to discover the influence of stars and planets on persons or events. Its resurgence on recent years is due in part to the declining influence of biblical principles in Western civilization. It's not uncommon to find even professing Christians who read the astrology charts. The Bible clearly condemns the use of mediums, spiritualists, and astrology. Referring to astrologers and "those who prophesy by the stars," Isaiah says that "they have become like stubble, fire burns them; they cannot deliver themselves from the power of the flame" (Isaiah 47:13-14). Why? They're condemned because believers have direct access to God. We do not need to use a "medium" or study the planets in order to know what we should do or what God has in store for us. Stars and planets do not influence our lives; only God claims that kind of influence. It defies common sense to believe that those born in certain months or spans of times have similar personality characteristics. This is one of those cases where Christians have a duty to admonish and correct those who may engage in harmful practices. We'll read more about that tomorrow.

Psalms 70, 71; 2 Thessalonians 1:1-12; Matthew 6:25-34

### Friday, May 3

#### Birthdays:

*Prayers for: Silvia Flores; David & Linda Flower; Joyce Fontaine; John & Cecelia Gabrielson; Fr. Oscar & Alejandra Gallego, Anthony, Santiago*

**Matthew 7:1-12 "You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly enough to take the speck out of your brother's eye." (v.5)**

This verse does not say that we should neglect or overlook the speck that is in our brother's eye. There may be occasions when it's necessary to admonish others. Paul urges Christians to "admonish the unruly" (1 Thessalonians 5:14) and even to "reject a factious man after a first and second warning" (Titus 3:10). Psychologists have long recognized that we are most likely to feel irritated by traits in others that are also characteristic of ourselves. Jesus also knew this; so, he said we should make sure we've purged ourselves of any flaw we might seek to correct in others. If I act resentful and grouchy, then I have no right to correct someone about not being loving enough towards me. What he meant was that we should judge others only with great care and that such carefulness begins with self-judgment. I believe any kind of criticism or correction of others should be rare and taken only when necessary to correct sinful or thoughtless behavior and prevent future repercussions on others.

Leviticus 23:1-22; Psalm 106:1-18; 2 Thessalonians 2:1-17

## Saturday, May 4

### *Birthdays:*

*Prayers for: Leobardo & Janeth Gallegos, L. Daniel, Jennifer; David Gandin; Lidia Garcia; Manny Garcia; Clay & Natasha Gardner; Barbara Garney*

**Matthew 7:13-21** "Beware of the false prophets who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves." (v.15)

Many of us have witnessed our share of Christian leaders who fell into public disgrace. The Bible warns Christians of the necessity of distinguishing between the true and the false prophets: "Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God." (1 John 4:1). The Bible gives three important clues to aid in this discernment. First, does this leader honor Jesus? John goes on to say, "By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God." Talking about Jesus isn't enough, however. Next ask whether this person lives an everyday life that is full of good deeds. Does he or she produce the "fruits of the spirit" Jesus speaks of when he says, "You will know them by their fruits"? Third, what kind of relationships does this leader have with close associates? Do those who know him or her in daily life express love and admiration? Jesus says, "By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13:35). It may not be our job to expose the false prophets in church leadership positions. We should, however, recognize the signs clearly enough so that we can ignore them and look elsewhere for our leadership.

Leviticus 23:23-44; Psalms 75, 76; 2 Thessalonians 3:1-18

## Sunday, May 5

### *Birthdays:*

*Prayers for: Phil & Susie Geaslen; Brandon & Candy Geer, Cathy; Nicholas & Hillary Gerber, Elijah, Adalee, Jonah, Noah, Eden; Fr. Stan & Mary Gerber*

**Luke 12:13-21** "But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?' This is how it will be with anyone who stores up things for himself but is not rich toward God." (vv.20-21 NIV)

When asked how much John D. Rockefeller left when he died, the response was "Everything." In the parable of the rich fool, Jesus tells us the rich man suffered the same fate. I don't know about Rockefeller, but the rich fool had no thought that his possessions really belonged to God and his responsibility was to manage them so others would benefit from his wealth. Recently I heard a stewardship message based on four words: "God owns it all." While pondering this short but powerful phrase, I pray the following thoughts would remain in my heart and keep me rich toward God and generous toward others: God owns it all. He enables me to hold things of this world with open hands rather than clenched fists. God owns it all. He enables me to weather the inevitable changes in my life with grace and peace rather than despair. God owns it all. He enables me to give to others with joy and thanksgiving rather than begrudgingly. God owns it all. He enables me to live free from greed and its heavy burdens.

Leviticus 25:1-17; Psalms 93, 96; James 1:2-8, 16-18

## Monday, May 6

### *Birthdays:*

*Prayers for: Mar Giah; Nathaniel & Nicole Giles, Bailey, Gabriel; Juan & Alma Gonzales, Gabriela, Yanelly; Leocadio & Ophelia Gonzales*

**Colossians 1:9-14** For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you and asking God to fill you with the knowledge of His will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding that the Spirit gives. (v.9)

The following prayer is attributed to Bobbie Richardson, a former New York Yankee second baseman: "Dear God, your will, nothing more, nothing less, nothing else." How do we know when we have the knowledge of God's will for our lives? I recently made Raggedy Ann dolls for our Christmas fair. Because I had the instructions I could embroider the dolls' faces, sew on their hair, make the dolls' clothes, and be satisfied that what I made really were Raggedy Ann dolls! Our manual for knowing God and discerning His will for our lives is the Bible. In the Gospel of John, we see that Jesus never spoke a word except what God told him to speak and he never acted contrary to what the Father asked him do. By his example he showed us how to live in God's will every moment of every day. Spending time with God in Scripture and in prayer each day are key ingredients to being filled with the knowledge of His will. Once we are filled with the knowledge of God's will, then, of course, we should obey Him—nothing more, nothing less, nothing else.

Leviticus 25:35-55; Psalm 80; Matthew 13:1-16

## Tuesday, May 7

### *Birthdays:*

*Prayers for: Bill & Cindy Griffin; Keith & Annamaria Hager, Skylar, Slade, Sophia; Paul & Pat Hancock; Mark & Mary Hargis; Mary Ellen Harrington*

**Leviticus 26:1-20** "I will walk among you and be your God, and you will be my people." (v.12)

In today's reading from Leviticus, God has announced His decrees through Moses and tells the Israelites that if they obey His commands things will go well with them. He will reward them with rain for their thirsty crops, their harvests will be bountiful, there will be peace in the land, and they will be safe from their enemies. Why on earth would the Israelites want to live apart from that kind of care and protection? Life was peaceful and full of God's abundant riches, and yet the Israelites had, on more than one occasion, willfully moved into forbidden territory. In A Shepherd's Look at the Twenty Third Psalm, Phillip Keller tells of providing lush green meadows for his flock only to have one of his sheep deliberately push through the fence into an adjoining pasture riddled with poisonous weeds. Sadly, like the Israelites, we have a tendency to stray from the lush fields of God's safety and protection and get ourselves entangled in the poisonous weeds of the world. God, in His infinite mercy, however, is ready at any moment to pick us up and bring us home where we belong. Thanks be to God!

Psalm 78:1-39; 1 Timothy 2:1-6; Matthew 13:18-23

### Wednesday, May 8

#### *Birthdays:*

*Prayers for: David & Mary Hartshorn; Bonnie Hartwell; Nicholas & Billie Hearn, Boden; Bill & Kris Heeter; Cody Hicks; Patrick & Susan Howard*

**Psalm 119:97-120 Your statutes are my heritage forever; they are the joy of my heart. My heart is set on keeping your decrees to the very end. (vv.111-112)**

A few months ago, we received a call in the middle of the night. We knew it could come but were not ready to receive it. The heart of a beloved brother in Christ had stopped. There had been bypasses, medications, and other procedures over the years, but suddenly his heart failed. Life depends on this amazing organ to pump blood throughout our body and when it stops physical life ends. The psalmist understood the heart as the essence of what it means to be human. It was considered the center of the human spirit, the seat of emotions, wisdom, and understanding, and the source of our response to the grace God lavishes on us. Whether we think of the heart's physical function or envision it as what makes us unique, it is at the center of our lives. It is not surprising that the psalmist wrote of the Lord's commandments as the joy of his heart and how he longed to keep them. Are the Lord's commandments the joy of your heart? Do you long to keep them to the very end? "My flesh trembles in fear of you; I stand in awe of your laws" (v.120).

Leviticus 26:27-42; Ephesians 1:1-10; Matthew 22:41-46

### Thursday, May 9

#### *Birthdays:*

*Prayers for: Francisco Hernandez & Laura Duenez, Yamileth, Heidy, Matias, Aiden; Leonard & Jean Hight, Beth, Chip, Sarah; Ted & Shelly Huckaby, Kyra*

**Matthew 28:16-20 "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, ...teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you." (vv.19-20)**

Jesus gathered his disciples on a mountain in Galilee and gave them their marching orders, "go and make disciples." While surfing the Web recently, I came across the web site of a church in Connecticut. The home page states, "Every member a disciple." Eugene Peterson defines discipleship as: "Anything that causes what is believed in the heart to have demonstrable consequences in our daily life" (A Long Obedience in the Same Direction). Christian discipleship begins with our relationship with Jesus. His words apply to us just as much as they did to the early followers with him on the mountain 2,000 years ago. The message is still the same, go and make disciples. This is not simply a great suggestion; it is Jesus' Great Commission and all Christians are called to be Great Commission people. We are truly his disciples when we follow him and then go out and bring others to our Lord. It is not our responsibility to convert another person, that's the work of the Holy Spirit, but we are commanded to go, to tell and to invite others into presence of Jesus.

Daniel 7:9-14; Psalms 8, 47; Hebrews 2:5-18

### Friday, May 10

#### *Birthdays:*

*Prayers for: Roberto & Julie Huerta, Knox, Schuyler, Ify Ibekwe; Donald & Marilyn Ishler; Harry & Pamela Jankowiak; Fr. Aaron & Amy Jeffrey*

**Ephesians 2:1-10 For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do. (v.10)**

I like to contemplate how our Great Designer lovingly and joyfully created our world. The air we breathe is perfectly designed for us. The rotation of the earth is exactly the spin needed to sustain life. If the sun and moon were a bit closer or farther away, our world would be a very different place. Then there are our amazing bodies! I imagine God lovingly deciding who gets what color hair, skin, and eyes; who is to be tall, or short or in between. God surely loves diversity, and yet beyond the world we live in and our physical bodies, He has written His signature on each and every heart that says, "You are mine. I made you for a purpose and until you come to me you will never be truly yourself." We can try to erase or ignore His signature, but eventually we must come to the end of ourselves. He has uniquely designed us and given us the gifts to do the good works He has prepared in advance for us to do. As we serve Him, we find our true identity and bring glory to God's Holy Name.

1 Samuel 2:1-10; Psalms 85, 86; Matthew 7:22-27

### Saturday, May 11

#### *Birthdays:*

*Prayers for: Beth Johnson; Leigh Johnson, Emma, Sam, Grayson; Cathy Johnson; Jim & Vicki Jones; Judith Jordan; Judy Kirk, Kenneth & Connie Klutts*

**Ephesians 2:11-22 He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. (v.17)**

In *What's So Amazing about Grace?*, Philip Yancey writes of the ungrace that is so common in our world. We don't have to look very far to find it. There is ungrace in our relationships with family members and neighbors who choose to argue with each other. One ethnic group treats another in ways that they themselves would never want to be treated. People and nations war with each other, sometimes as the result of feuds that began centuries ago. Sadly, even within members of God's household there are disputes that cause division and the establishment of new churches and denominations. There may appear to be winners and losers, those who are inside the wall and those who are outside, but there is no real peace. The peace missing in human relationships is only offered to the world by the one who came as the Prince of Peace. He is our peace who has made the two one. We may like to believe that we are good enough and smart enough to devise wonderful peace plans but, in the end, it is only Jesus who is both peacemaker and peace.

Numbers 11:16-17, 24-29; Psalms 87, 90; Matthew 7:28—8:4

## Sunday, May 12

*Birthdays:*

*Prayers for: Joe & Penelope Kenney, Joshua, Aiden, Grace; Michael & Toni Knapp; Roger & Paula Koehler; Patsy Kotlan, Jay; Rina Alejandra La Cruz*

**Exodus 3:1-12 The Lord said, "I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard them crying out because of their slave drivers, and I am concerned about their suffering." (v.7 NIV)**

Our Lord is deeply concerned about our suffering. He doesn't just feel sorry for us. God took our suffering so seriously that he "came down to rescue us" (v.8), becoming one of us, suffering like us and with us. You may be thinking, "So what? God may be compassionate, but I'm still in a pit. My stomach is still in knots. My child is still sick. My mother is still dead." These are all valid questions, and Jesus answers them. He says, "I love you so much that I suffered and died for you. I am fully acquainted with suffering. Learn from me how to suffer, and you will taste its fruit" (see Romans 5:3). While suffering under house arrest, the apostle Paul wrote, "I want to know Christ...and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings..." (Philippians 3:10). It is clear throughout his letters that Paul did experience a fellowship with God that made him rejoice as he suffered. Paul learned to suffer like Christ and with Christ, and that made all the difference.

Psalms 66, 67; Hebrews 12:18-29; Luke 10:17-24

## Monday, May 13

*Birthdays:*

*Prayers for: Nathan & Bonnie Kyser, Olivia, Elizabeth; Richard & Susan Williamson; Tommy & Kathryn Lamb; Caye & Paul Lankford; Linda Llewellyn*

**Ephesians 3:1-13 I became a servant of this gospel by the gift of God's grace... (v.7)**

On April 29, 2000, I attended a silent retreat at a monastery in Alabama. During a service, I was asked to read the above passage from Paul's letter to the Ephesians. I got up and started reading, "For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles..." (v.1). Suddenly, something very strange happened. Paul's words became my own, and I sensed God saying to me, "You are like Paul. You share in his calling. Go share Me with the world." Through tears, I finished the reading, sat down, and literally sobbed. God commissioned me right there in front of strangers, rather unexpectedly, during a simple reading. I was overcome with a sense of his presence, his anointing, and the "unsearchable riches of Christ" (v.8). As God continues to reveal "the mystery of Christ," I feel chosen and loved. And, as Joshua, I know we must be courageous, knowing ourselves to be children of the promise, committed to obeying God, standing firmly on the knowledge that we are never alone. God's grace abounds; praise the Lord!

Joshua 1:1-9; Psalm 89:1-18; Matthew 8:5-17

## Tuesday, May 14

*Birthdays:*

*Prayers for: Risher & Sherilyn Lewis; David & Laura Liggett; Chris & Diane Lolley, Lauren; Bishop Clark & Tricia Lowenfield; Dorothy Lowrie*

**Ephesians 3:14-21 Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us... (v.20)**

Today's readings are tied together by the theme of power. When Samuel anointed David, we are told that "from that day on the Spirit of the Lord came upon David in power" (1 Samuel 16:13). In Matthew, we see a display of Christ's power, at whose rebuke even the winds and the waves were stilled. The psalms paint a picture of a sovereign God who is Lord over heaven and earth. Our "King is mighty" (Psalm 99:4) indeed! In Ephesians, Paul points out that the love of Christ is so astounding that we need power to grasp it! Jesus totally redefined the concept of power, showing us that God's mighty power is fueled by His outrageous love. We cannot separate God's power from His love. Christ's most powerful act was his triumph over evil and death on the cross, an act of self-emptying love. To the world, this message is foolishness, "but to us who are being saved it is the power of God" (1 Corinthians 1:18). May we grasp this truth and receive it personally today, that our hearts may be set free to love.

1 Samuel 16:1-13a; Psalms 97, 99, 100; Matthew 8:18-27

## Wednesday, May 15

*Birthdays:*

*Prayers for: Pat Landgren; Garret & Leslie Maddox, Cruz, Michael, Gabriel; Andrew & Sandra Mann, Marian, Maggie; Galen & Jody Mansee*

**Psalms 101 The deeds of faithless men I hate; they will not cling to me... I will have nothing to do with evil. (vv.3b, 4b)**

Abraham Lincoln once said, "I remember my mother's prayers, and they have always followed me. They have clung to me my whole life." I have something in common with Lincoln's mother, as so many of us parents do! I, too, want my prayers to cling to my children like a garment, protecting and embracing them. My oldest son's birthday is coming up in a few weeks. Please join me as I pray for him with the words of Paul from Ephesians 4: Lord, I pray that my David will "live a life worthy of the calling" he has received. May he grow to be "completely humble and gentle, bearing with others in love." May he, in all things, "grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ." I pray with the psalmist that "he whose walk is blameless will minister" to all my children (Psalm 101:6b). May they have nothing to do with evil. And, Lord, create over them "a cloud of smoke by day and a glow of flaming fire by night" (Isaiah 4:5). May they remain under the shadow of your wings.

Isaiah 4:2-6; Psalm 109; Ephesians 4:1-16; Matthew 8:28-34

## Thursday, May 16

### *Birthdays:*

*Prayers for: Elena Manzano, Dylan Olivo; Karina Martinez, Xavien; Rodolfo & Irma Martinez, Edgar, Benjamin; Fr. Nazir & Agnes Masih, Samia*

### **Psalm 105:1-22 Let the hearts of those who seek the LORD rejoice. (v.3b)**

I can recall going on a memorable nature hunt with my son, Joshua, when he was very young. We found pinecones, leaves, acorns, rocks, and listened for animal sounds. We saw squirrels, birds, butterflies, bees, and a peculiar crawling insect I had never seen. With each new discovery, we were both so excited! Although we couldn't find the family of four deer that had recently visited our front yard, the search was so enriching. Today's psalm speaks of rejoicing as we seek the Lord, even before we find him. As Joshua and I walked in attentive expectation, all our senses were heightened. We paid attention to every sound and every smell. Things that normally might have been taken for granted became a source of delight, especially as we shared our discoveries. Our faith walk is so much like this nature hunt. Our God is incomprehensible. But as we seek Him earnestly, we get glimpses of His goodness and His love. As we seek our Lord, we find Him—sometimes in unexpected ways. And as we share our journey with others we rejoice, realizing that He is the treasure we seek.

Zechariah 4:1-14; Ephesians 4:17-32; Matthew 9:1-8

## Friday, May 17

### *Birthdays:*

*Prayers for: Mike & Penny Mason; Frankie & Stephanie Masterson, Franklin, Caroline, Amelia; Martha Ann Matkin; Chip & Felicia Matthews*

### **Psalm 102 But you, O LORD, sit enthroned forever; your renown endures through all generations. (v.12)**

How blessed is the psalmist, who was able to focus on God in the midst of his affliction. A crucial transition takes place between verses 11 and 12. The word "but" brings hope out of utter despair. It's amazing how quickly negativity can consume us, if we allow it. This often starts with one seemingly innocent thought that is not submitted in obedience to Christ (see 2 Corinthians 10:5). If we're blessed to recognize the downward spiral being built thought by thought, an act of the will can stop the construction process. When we choose to focus on God's sovereignty rather than our fears, everything changes. We are told in Romans 12:2 to be "transformed by the renewing of (our) minds". One great way to do this is by memorizing Scripture; another is praise. Paul exhorts us to "Sing and make music in (our) heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything..." (Ephesians 5:19-20) This is a simple yet often elusive key to contentment, joy, and peace. Praise is a powerful balm unto our souls, as it keeps us in communion with God and joined to the host of angels who forever praise him. Let us praise the Lord who sits enthroned forever, and let us build him a throne in our hearts.

Jeremiah 31:27-34; Ephesians 5:1-20; Matthew 9:9-17

## Saturday, May 18

### *Birthdays:*

*Prayers for: Javier & Janeth Mayor; Francesca Mba-Jonas, Jacqlyne, Rollins; Sharon McAllister; Carol McBee; Bob & Nerisa McConnell*

### **Psalm 108 I will awaken the dawn. I will praise you, O LORD, among the nations; I will sing of you among the peoples. (vv.2b-3)**

Years ago, I attended a Cursillo retreat that changed my life. Since then, I often awaken in the middle of the night singing praises to the Lord. It's as if my spirit has been awake singing to God while the rest of me sleeps. What a glorious gift! This has been one of many "showers of blessing" (Ezekiel 34:26) that I've received since knowing Jesus. Praise has transforming power. I'm not talking about insincere flattery. I'm talking about honoring, applauding, paying tribute to our Creator for who He is and what He has done. Praise is full of life. It regenerates, renews; it waters the garden of our soul as it magnifies the Lord. I love the imagery in today's verse. I visualize our praises ascending to heaven as incense. As they join those of the choir of angels that forever sing "Holy, holy, holy," God's light pierces the darkness as if to say: "Remember you have already been conquered." The praises of humans and angels alike join mysteriously to awaken the dawn by praising the Maker of the dawn. And, yes, our praise can also awaken the dawn within our weary souls, bringing light out of darkness. Praise the Lord, oh, my soul; praise the Lord!

Ezekiel 36:22-27; Psalm 107:33-43; Ephesians 6:10-24; Matthew 9:18-26

## Sunday, May 19

### *Birthdays:*

*Prayers for: Nancy McCracken, Doug & Natalie McGehee; Jim & Marty Medford; Clayton Melanson; Richard & Jacqueline Moehring*

### **Deuteronomy 16:9-12 Count off seven weeks from the time you begin to put the sickle to the standing grain. (v.9 ESV)**

On this Church festival day in 1770, British Navy Captain James Cook sailed into a beautiful 74-island group, the Whitsundays, near the Great Barrier Reef in Australia, and named the islands after the occasion. The term "White Sunday," used in England, refers to the baptismal garments worn by those who entered the church at this time. The other popular color of the day is red, a reference to the tongues of fire that appeared above those who were baptized in the Holy Spirit seven weeks after the resurrection of Jesus on Easter Sunday. Jesus revealed the universal change to the world's segregated habits that his arrival foreshadowed when he told the Samaritan woman, "The hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father." Neither red nor white, Northern Hemisphere nor South, would define the encounter the Father sought with those who were created in His Image. The Son came to rescue all. And the Holy Spirit would be poured out on all mankind, to the farthest corners of the world.

Psalm 118; Acts 4:18-21, 23-33; John 4:19-26

## Monday, May 20

### *Birthdays:*

*Prayers for: Arturo Mendoza; Alex & Jordan Monacy, Sadie; Keith & Beth Moore, Amanda, Mellissa; Jesus & Angie Morales; Cliff & Colleen Nelson*

### **Proverbs 3:11-20 Nothing you desire can compare with her. (v.15b)**

Jay Rosenblatt took home movies with his daughter on her birthday every year from age 2 to 17, the year she was leaving home for college. He asked her the same questions each year. The short documentary, How Do You Measure a Year, shows Ella growing by stages from being a giggling child, a spunky tomboy, an unhappy teenager, to a serious but shy high school senior. As she meets the ongoing string of life expectations, older viewers who have been there and done that can only groan sympathetically. Frustrations arise when we use the wrong desires, out of order, to set our agendas. Having a patient dad who loves you is priceless. Our ears are sensitive to the world we walk through, but they can't respond to ice cream. Our eyes don't care what music is pleasing our ears. The collector of Proverbs warns that, in a clutter of life desires, nothing is as valuable as God's direction and wisdom. Having a loving Father who gladly shares that with us is priceless.

Psalms 1, 2, 3; 1 John 3:18—4:6; Matthew 11:1-6

## Tuesday, May 21

### *Birthdays:*

*Prayers for: Jeff & Lisa Musick, Alex, Zach, Ben; Blake & Lauren Muskiet, Ethan, Parker; Mark & Alice Norman, Hannah; Angel & Arianna Nunez*

### **Psalm 5 Make your way straight before me. (v.8b)**

The week I was writing these daily devotions, I was also wrestling with computer monitor problems. Suddenly I could only get a small, old-style "narrow" image on the screen instead of a proper, full "wide screen" display. I tinkered to my shallow technical limits. I went online ordering 3 or 4 new parts one at a time. Nothing resolved the problem. Computer user group readers suggested that I might need a whole new (not cheap) video card. The first one I got didn't fit. The second one worked only after a kind tech friend came by to look things over. The whole DIY "try this, try that" process took two weeks. What I do know about computers is that these complicated, ingenious devices are designed to connect and work one, intended, right way. Any alternative choices I may try, no matter how shiny the ideas seem, won't work for long, if at all. When I have a problem, I save time by asking for the manufacturer's directions first and then doing that. People always tell me that. They're right.

Proverbs 4:1-27; Psalm 6; 1 John 4:7-21; Matthew 11:7-15

## Wednesday, May 22

### *Birthdays:*

*Prayers for: Dele Oduola; Kemi Oduola, Francisca & Gabriel; Nnochiri & Chika Ojirika, Amarachi, Dinichi; Joe & Dawn Ontiveros, Hannah, Sophia*

### **1 John 5:1-12 If we receive the testimony of men, the testimony of God is greater.... (v.9)**

For 30 years, students of Decision Theory have argued over the Sleeping Beauty puzzle. Sleeping Beauty is put to sleep on Sunday and a coin is tossed. If the coin is heads, she's awakened Monday morning, asked one question, and then put back to sleep. If the coin is tails, she's awakened again Tuesday morning and asked the same question. When she's asleep, she loses all her memory of what happened earlier. The test question is, "Did the coin come up heads or tails?" The experiment means to analyze issues of belief formation. Given the experiment rules, how will Sleeping Beauty decide her answer? The same puzzle faces us reading claims in the Bible. Sleeping Beauty's first decision is not about some coin toss. Her first decision has to be about whether to believe the people who say there even was a coin toss. If we won't believe the witnesses God has sent to tell us what's going on, we will have no way to find out where we really are, or what's happening in the world He has made.

Proverbs 6:1-19; Psalm 119:1-24; Matthew 11:16-24

## Thursday, May 23

### *Birthdays:*

*Prayers for: Ubong Jeffrey & Jane Okon, Judith, Joan, Jeremy; Rudy & Trisha Ortiz; Alexander & Dawn Osaji, Brittany, Emmanuel, Alexandra*

### **1 John 5:13-21 I write these things to you who believe.... (v.13)**

My church has Sunday school classes on general topics that are open to all. Other classes focus on heavy themes where it is recommended that attendees join up from the beginning. It is harder to get in step with those subjects if you haven't been able to be there from the start of the series. The Bible is like that. Some parts can be picked up "in the middle" as it were. Other sections are harder to grasp fully if it's your first time in. John wrote about some of those deep truths that were more easily received by believers who had been faithful followers of Jesus for a while. God's Word has milk for those young in their faith. And there's meat for those who have had time to grow in spiritual maturity. It's always a good time to read the Bible a first time. Returning to read it again and again is when you see new, deeper revelations that invite your spiritual roots to grow even deeper.

Proverbs 7:1-27; Psalm 18:1-20; Matthew 11:25-30

## Friday, May 24

### Birthdays:

*Prayers for: James & Caroline Osteen; Jennifer Parker, Larry, Lily, Chloe; Chris & Meagan Patton, Christopher, Cohen; Dcn. John & Tracy Pegues*

### **2 John 1-13 I would rather not use paper and ink. (v.12b)**

Surveys report that 7 out of 10 Americans use internet social media to stay in touch. Last year, the web platform Facebook had nearly 3 billion users. 98% of them used their mobile phones to post and read messages there. It's not just America. Facebook is the third most-visited website in the world. 90% of Facebook users live outside the U.S. and Canada. Only half of Facebook users speak English. A craving for contact with someone else is at the core of God's design, making us in His image. The Trinitarian image of God is one of relationship. The desire to communicate is evident in the writings of the Bible. Three quarters of the New Testament took the form of personal letters. Even so, the writers recognized limitations in this medium. Writing a few lines to one special, chosen lady, John explained his brevity. It was the same heart cry heard in the Father's question while searching for Adam. He didn't come to leave a note. He wanted to hear a voice. And He had given us ears.

Proverbs 8:1-21; Psalms 16, 17; Matthew 12:1-14

## Saturday, May 25

### Birthdays:

*Prayers for: Steve & Carol Powell; Chris & Nanette Radke; Mike & Cecelia Railey; Dane & Kelly Ray; David & Carol Ray; Alan & Jan Rendl*

### **3 John 1-15 Beloved, it is a faithful thing you do in all your efforts for these brothers, strangers as they are. (v.5)**

Anglican Vicar Peter Owen-Jones filmed a BBC special on his attempt to live a simple life by following the rule of St. Francis of Assisi. As part of his experiment, Fr. Peter set out on a 240-mile pilgrimage across southern England, taking no money along, depending on the charity of strangers to provide him with food and shelter each day. At one point, walking on a lonely country road, he finds a plate of freshly picked apples on the ground. A hand-written sign on the plate says, "Help yourself." Having had nothing to eat that day, Fr. Peter gratefully takes an apple. The owners of the apple tree, wherever it is and whoever they are, remain anonymous, uncredited, and unknown. It is not important to always know the details and outcomes of our sacrifices and stewardship in God's kingdom. Those things are in good hands when we leave them in His Hands. We are in Those Hands.

Proverbs 8:22-36; Psalms 20, 21; Matthew 12:15-21

## Sunday, May 26

### Birthdays:

*Prayers for: Laura Rendon, Evelyn, Alizha, Angilina; Martha Rodabaugh, Lauren, Cassie; Kathy Rohm; David Ronkainen; Robert Rusinovich*

### **Luke 10:25-28, 38-42 "Teacher," he asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?" (v.25b NIV)**

Today's reading from Luke contains two seemingly unrelated incidents. One is the "expert in the law" asking Jesus about eternal inheritance (leading to Jesus telling the Parable of the Good Samaritan, which is not in our reading). The other is Jesus' visit to the home of Martha and Mary, wherein Martha is told by Jesus, "Mary has chosen what is better." How do these two situations fit together? In the first one, the expert in the law is trying to justify himself by way of the Jewish law. Jesus boils the law down to the command that we love God with everything we have and our neighbor as ourself. By then going on to illustrate by way of the Parable of the Good Samaritan, Jesus is telling the man that what is important is not the letter of the law, but the spirit of it. In the Martha/Mary scenario, Martha is busy taking care of all the household chores while Mary sits listening to what Jesus has to say. Martha, just like the expert in the law, is "doing the right thing" while Mary just sits there at Jesus' feet. Martha is the letter of the law, Mary the spirit of it. Neither the "expert" nor Martha was doing anything wrong. It was just that there was something better. Jesus wants us to obey the law, but he wants to understand it at both the head level and the heart level.

Proverbs 9:1-12; Psalms 148, 149, 150; Acts 8:14-25

## Monday, May 27

### Birthdays:

*Prayers for: Angel & Connie Rosa, Tyann, Matthew, Sara, Erik; Leticia & Horacio Salazar Jr., Elizabeth, Horacio, Victor, Santos, Alberto, Manuel*

### **1 Timothy 1:1-17 The goal of this command is love, which comes from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith. (v.5)**

The problem about which Paul is writing Timothy is false teachers, and we'll get to them in a later reading this week. But, for now, let's look at the elements of true holiness, which Paul prescribes as a remedy for the false doctrines that are being taught. Paul says that the goal is love, "which comes from a pure heart, and a good conscience and a sincere faith." A person with a pure heart would have a heart toward God. We would only want to speak the truth, because that is what God would want us to do. That would be the loving thing to do. Having a good conscience would mean that we are "confessed up." There is no guilt on our conscience because, although we sin, God is quick to forgive sincere repentance. By being "confessed up," we are in a right relationship with God, not motivated by evil desires, and can reflect God's love. A sincere faith would indicate that we put God as top priority in our lives. If God is first in our lives, and Jesus is our example of how to live, how can we show anything but love? Well, of course, we will do the unloving thing from time to time; we sin and fall short of the glory of God no matter how much we think we love Him. But, we will do better the more we keep love as our goal and have a pure heart, a good conscience and a sincere faith.

Proverbs 10:1-12; Psalm 25; Matthew 12:22-32

## Tuesday, May 28

### Birthdays:

*Prayers for: Corinne Sandifer, Jon & Jency Santos, Penelope; Charles & Dcn. Jennifer Scherzer; Ronnie Sefcik, Todd; Jack & Summer Sherrod, Braylee*  
**1 Timothy 1:18—2:8 I urge, then, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for all people—for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. (vv.1-2)**

The seemingly endless presidential election campaign has had us in its grip for quite a while. Candidates have called other candidates names, played to some of the worst prejudices of the electorate, and have scapegoated groups of people (usually those with little money, power, and influence) as responsible for the country's woes. They have tried to convince voters that they are paragons of personal and civic virtue, committed to family (if not Christian) values and to elevating the tone of moral discourse in the nation. Meanwhile, polls reveal that the "average citizen" is becoming more and more cynical about politicians. And Paul tells Timothy and us to "for kings and all those in authority"? He does. And we are to pray for them that "that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness." It is too easy for us to despise politicians. On occasion, I hear myself and other Christians describing them in language which violates minimum standards of charity and respect. Sad to say, I don't hear from my lips or the lips of other Christians heartfelt and frequent prayers for our leaders. Maybe that's why there is so little peace and godliness and respect in our civic life.

Proverbs 15:16-33; Psalms 26, 28; Matthew 12:33-42

## Wednesday, May 29

### Birthdays:

*Prayers for: Warren & Donna Settles, Linden, Ethan, Deanna; Valerie Shepherd; Laura Shipman, Emilia; David Sierra & Nina Torres, Alondra, Andrea*  
**Matthew 12:43-50 "And the final condition of that person is worse than the first." (v.45b)**

In verses 43-45 of today's Gospel lesson, Jesus is talking about the realm of Satan, the work of evil spirits. Many people today, including many Christians, don't believe in a force of evil at loose in the world. C.S. Lewis put it this way. "There are two equal and opposite errors into which our race can fall about the devils. One is to disbelieve in their existence. The other is to feel an excessive and unhealthy interest in them. The devils are equally pleased by both errors." The point Jesus is making in his teaching is that the first step is, by repentance, to rid our lives of sin, and the second is to fill our lives with the knowledge of Scripture and the Holy Spirit. Unfilled and complacent people are an easy target for Satan.

Proverbs 17:1-20; Psalm 38; 1 Timothy 3:1-16

## Thursday, May 30

### Birthdays:

*Prayers for: Brenda Spiess; Frank & Pat Stahl; Lee & Dianna Stein; Bennett & Franne Stewart; Lee Carole Stoerner; Anne Sundquist; Charlotte Talley*  
**1 Timothy 4:1-16 The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons. (v.1)**

This passage begins with the above quoted words, and ends with these: "Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers" (v.16). I had mentioned earlier (Monday), that Paul was warning Timothy about false teachers. Here, he not only gets specific about that, but warns Timothy to be careful of his own teaching. Our lives need to be a witness of our beliefs; otherwise, we make a mockery of our beliefs. If we also have occasion to teach (even if, or perhaps especially if, it is our children), this is even more important. What we teach may either beneficially affect (if it is truth) or severely jeopardize (if it is false doctrine) not only ourselves but those who try to learn from us. Wrong beliefs, no matter how logical and loving they may sound, can lead to sin and heresy. Thus, we need to be on guard against those who would try to persuade us that other factors (feelings, scientific speculation, cultural norms, etc.) are more important than what we believe. And we need to be growing in knowledge of our Lord through Scripture so that we know what we believe.

Proverbs 21:30—22:6; Psalm 37:1-18; Matthew 13:24-30

## Friday, May 31

### Birthdays:

*Prayers for: Linda Tervay; Greg & Terry Thomas; Lucy Tischler; Lori & Dieter Tischler; Jim & Elaine Tummy; Mary Lee Turk; Jose & Brenda Valencia*  
**Psalms 31 Blessed be the LORD, for he has wondrously shown his steadfast love to me, when I was beset as in a besieged city. (v.21)**

Throughout my life, I have heard and gently mocked the old adage "The darkest hour is before the dawn." It seems a trite way of describing the experience of personal suffering and tragedy. The suggestion that pain and loss can lead to a new day with the possibility of joy may appear cruel to some. The psalmist doesn't agree: he praises God that in the midst of overwhelming personal distress, God "has wondrously shown his steadfast love." The psalmist has seen the dawn in the darkest hour. God does allow us glimpses of His steadfast love in our darkest times. They may be seen in the loving presence of friends who minister to us when we feel overwhelmed by sadness. Or in moments of deep peace which unexpectedly envelop us in the midst of great spiritual and psychological turmoil. Or in a night of restful sleep when sleep has seemed impossible. His steadfast love comes like a gentle breeze at the end of a storm. We need only open our hearts to Him in our pain and receive His grace.

Proverbs 23:19-21, 29—24:2; 1 Timothy 5:17-25; Matthew 13:31-35